

Madam Chairperson, Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) has been reviewed and we now have in place the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS2). Vulnerability and exclusion is one of the key themes, and social protection programmes are within the framework of this document. Furthermore gender perspectives have been incorporated into all the themes.

Ghana has reached the HIPC completion point and savings from the HIPC initiative has been directed at education and training, health, potable water, sanitation and other facilities – all critical areas for child development and empowerment of the vulnerable. Women Development Fund, a micro credit initiative for women was established with funds allocated from the HIPC savings.

The creation of a Cabinet-level Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in 2001 was a demonstration of political will to address the problem of women's marginalization and raise the issues of women's rights and empowerment to a higher national level.

The mandate of MOWAC is to initiate/formulate policies and promote gender mainstreaming across all sectors that will lead to the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women, survival, development and growth of children as well as ensuring the protection of the rights of women and children. The designation of MOWAC as a Central Management Agency (CMA) with Cabinet status provides it with a comparative advantage with the role and responsibility to monitor policy implementation and programmes in the sector areas, coordinate cross sector issues and evaluate the impact of sector policies on women and children.

MOWAC brings together the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) and the Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC) under one coordinated national institutional framework to coordinate national efforts in promoting and advancing the rights of women and children in Ghana. The laws governing NCWD and the GNCC have been repealed. The two entities now operate as decentralized departments of women and children under the Ministry, and thus derive their orientation and guiding principles of operation from MOWAC.

The establishment of MOWAC is therefore a holistic response to the many and varying challenges of empowering women and highlighting Children concerns, protecting their rights, advocating for change in traditional practices and attitudes which deny them equality and equity in accessing national opportunities to facilitate the attainment of their potential and aspirations.

- **Support to Women's Economic and Political Empowerment:**

- Operation of government and donor funded Women's Development Fund.
- The Fund covers women in small scale farming. Agro Processing and Micro Enterprises. Since its inception in 2002 to-date, an amount of ₵96 billion cedis (about US\$10m) has been disbursed to 177,000 women throughout the country. The Fund has impacted significantly on the lives of about 708,000 families in the country and has also promoted micro enterprises development among women in the country. Women's groups have also been supported with Agro Processing Equipment to reduce post harvest loses, add value and increase their income.
- Establishment of Women in Local Governance Fund for Women's Participation in Local Government (District Assembly) Elections through innovative mobilization of resources from women with means and male supporters. This fund has been established to enhance women's participation in the District levels election in September 2006.
- A training manual has been developed. Capacities of women are being built to participate in Public life effectively.

Other Achievements

Other pro women's empowerment and gender equality institutional arrangements are:

- the establishment of the Girl Child Education Directorate in Ministry of Education, Women in Agriculture Development (WIAD) in Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), Maternal and Public Health Units of Ghana Health Service.
- Gender Desk Officers in all the 138 District Assemblies and Gender Focal Persons in MDAs.

- **Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ):** constitutional body monitoring human rights, dealing with violations and educating the public on human rights; Also the establishment of Legal Aid Boards are further acting to promote human rights.

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Other achievements in the Education Sector include:

- a) Organization of access courses for female students who could not make the mark to enter teacher training college as a means of encouraging more females into the teaching profession,
- b) Provision of on-site school feeding and food ration for girls towards the attainment of gender parity and

National Machinery has worked with NGOs to raise the consciousness of women to their political potential through educational programmes on political and legal literacy and economic empowerment projects.

A directory on eminent women is being updated to provide and ensure relevant and timely availability of information on eligible women for appointment.

An advocacy strategy for sensitizing appointing authorities on implementation of affirmative Action for women has been developed. We see however the appointment of 14 Deputy Ministers and 11 District Chief Executives (Mayors) including the one for the second biggest metropolis by the President of the Republic as a landmark achievement. Other key institutions headed by females are CHRAJ, NDPC, Government Statistical Service, Immigration, National Population Council, Chamber of Mines, Chair of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Finance and Chair of the Committee on Energy and Mines.

Peer Review

- Ghana achieved an important milestone on 22 January 2006 when the country submitted itself to a thorough peer review of its democratic and political governance and socio-economic development by Heads of State and Government of the African Union.
- The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) shows Africa's determination and commitment to change the status quo for the better. It was designed to enable African countries to monitor each other and promote better standards of governance, which includes respect for human rights and the rule of law, and equitable socio-economic development.
- Ghana was the first to sign up for the review after the APRM was launched in March 2003. The country worked diligently in highly participatory manner to complete the detailed processes and stages to become the first country in Africa to undergo the landmark peer review.

The Peer Review noted important constraints in the country one of them being problems of achieving gender equity and equality.

- Government has responded to these challenges by preparing a fully costed (at \$2.85 billion) and time-bound Programme of Action (POA) to deal with all the issues raised with appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes. The Independent APRM Governing Council is to be turned into a permanent body to continue to monitor the Programme of Action. Government has further demonstrated its firm

commitment by making significant allocations of budget funds to some of the activities in the POA. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, other MDAs, NGOs and Development Partners have to position ourselves to use this framework as another opening for enhancing women's empowerment, gender equity and equality.

Madam Chairperson, Ghana recently completed and signed the Compact of the Millennium Challenge Account sponsored by the Government of United States of America and will have access to US\$547m over 5 years for modernizing Agriculture, Transportation and Rural Development. Promoting and ensuring women's effective participation is captured expressly in the Compact and therefore enhances opportunities for empowerment of women in rural areas.

Challenges

Madam Chairperson, there are challenges of financial, human and material resources constraints as well as structural limitations still to be addressed.

Some specific challenges are:

- Under-resourcing of the Ministry and Women's Desk (Gender Focal Points) in MDAs;
- Low representation of women in political and decision making structures;
- Low enforcement of laws and implementation of policies;
- Inadequate gender disaggregated data and benchmarks of progress in achieving gender equality and mainstreaming;
- The challenge of institution coordination mechanisms;
- Inadequate research to assess laws, policies and programmes;
- Sociocultural attitudes, biases and impediments from family and community levels to national context.

Through collaborative effort of key sectors and with an injection of more resources and support from our development partners we hope to overcome these obstacles and achieve more in the years ahead.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the determination and commitment of the Government of Ghana to continue to adopt measures and initiatives that progressively propel us towards achievement of women's empowerment, gender equity and equality thereby fully implementing CEDAW in Ghana specifically, and the rest of the international community generally.

We are proud of our achievements, attaining a gender parity index of 0.97 %, in basic school enrolment, the girl child-friendly Capitation Grant Programme, the development of policy initiatives and legislations, dissemination of information to women at all levels, support for women economic activities especially at the micro level, focus on and improvement in health of women and children, collaboration with all stakeholders including NGOs etc.

Madam Chairperson, The progress made so far would not have been possible without the political commitment, support from all stakeholders, including Civil Society Organizations and our Development Partners.

May I use this occasion to express Ghana's sincere appreciation for the support we have received from our partners especially, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, DANIDA, CIDA, other bilateral and multilateral organizations as well as our local NGOs and Civil Society Organizations for their support which has brought us this far in our efforts to implement the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you all for your attention.